

Community agrees to fight as one

by Eva Wiland, Gazette editor

MORE than 200 concerned residents from all corners of the Willoughby LGA agreed unanimously at a protest meeting in Artarmon Community Hall on October 28 to continue fighting for medium density zoning at the Channel 9 site in Artarmon Rd.

The meeting was called after Nine Network's release of its preferred project report (PPR), proposing a reduction of dwellings for the Channel 9 site, from 600 (*May 2013 Gazette, p1*) to 450 and tower blocks from 18 storeys high down to 12 storeys.

Local NSW MP Gladys Berejiklian, WCC Mayor Pat Reilly, several councillors, including Naremburn Ward councillors Nic Wright, Michelle Sloane and Stuart Coppock, plus WWC environment services director Greg Woodhams, were present and all agreed Nine's proposal was still unacceptable in scale and height.

Everyone present unanimously passed a motion to press the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) to reject Nine's latest proposal, reaffirm the community's objection to the scale and density of Nine's PPR and stress the strong community support for limiting the number of apartments on the site to 300 and the maximum building height to eight storeys, as WCC proposed in its response to Nine's concept plan.

Willoughby Area Action Group (WAAG) convenor Peter Wilton told the meeting WCC's proposal was the accepted maximum – not an "ambit claim".

"The Willoughby community accepts



Standing together ... against TCN/WAAG

Channel 9's desire to redevelop their site and has not adopted a simple NIMBY 'no development' approach," he said. "Instead the community has endorsed a realistic alternative that both meets the need for development and solves the identified issues with Channel 9's high density proposal.

"We call on the NSW Government and PAC to realise true community consultation by listening and acting on the concerns and submissions of the Willoughby community."

WCC Environment Services director Greg Woodhams told the meeting Nine's PPR included a beneficial change in the site's south-east corner, replacing a previously planned apartment block with 11 townhouses, which the Council had adopted. Other benefits realised in WCC's counter-proposal were more open space and considerably less impact on the residences close to the site.

The proposal includes two entrances off Artarmon Rd, both to have "left turn in and left turn out" restrictions. The previously planned entrance-exit

off Richmond Ave will be retained and a roundabout is proposed at the intersection with Artarmon Rd.

Woodhams said NSW Planning would prepare a report, including recommendations for PAC, and had asked WCC for its amended counter-proposal which had been submitted on October 23.

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PAC was required to hold a public meeting to hear from interested parties and anyone could register to speak. Wilton said presentations should be pre-planned and co-ordinated through WAAG to achieve maximum effect.

Woodhams said PAC could approve, reject or approve with conditions when making its decision and might ask for a meeting with Council and Nine to brief it on their views strictly for information – not for lobbying, which would be confined to the PAC public meeting.

Reilly expressed strong support of the community action and drew attention to Council's continuing support, reflected in its postponement of a regular general

meeting to allow Councillors and officers the opportunity to attend our meeting.

He said the amount of open space proposed in the development for community use was not of any significance. "There is nothing in this development for the local community," he said. Nine's proposal would reduce property values in the neighbourhood but, if WCC's proposal were adopted, this would be lessened.

Berejiklian warned it would be a long fight, but said PAC's decision to ask Meriton to go back to the drawing board on the redevelopment of Thomas St Carpark in Chatswood after

community and Council objections was encouraging. She pledged her continuing full support of community efforts to convince the NSW Government and PAC to reject Nine's PPR in favour of the WCC proposal.

WAAG has drawn up an objection letter template and acting Willoughby South Progress Association president Bob Taffel urged residents to use it to email or send letters to NSW Planning director general Sam Haddad and PAC chair Gabrielle Kibble with copies to Berejiklian and planning minister Brad Hazzard. For copies, email: rtaffel@hotmail.com ■